

## Message Text

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ACTION EA-12

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FM AMEMBASSY SEOUL  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9457  
INFO AMEMBASSY TOKYO  
CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 SEOUL 1450

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS  
TAGS: PINT, KS  
SUBJECT: NDP CONVENTION IN 1978?

REF: SEOUL 1057 (DTG 080150Z FEB 78)

SUMMARY: DESPITE FORMAL DECISIONS BY THE POLICY-MAKING BODIES OF THE OPPOSITION NDP NOT TO NAME A CANDIDATE FOR THE 1978 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION, DISSIDENTS WITHIN THE PARTY HAVE HAD CONSIDERABLE INITIAL SUCCESS IN PETITIONING FOR RE-CONSIDERATION OF THIS ISSUE. FORCES OPPOSED TO NDP CHAIRMAN YI'S LEADERSHIP HAVE BEEN QUICK TO EXPLOIT THIS MOVEMENT. YI'S RETURN TO KOREA FEBRUARY 20 MARKS A NEW PHASE IN THE FACTIONAL STRUGGLE. END SUMMARY.

1. THE OPPOSITION NEW DEMOCRATIC PARTY (NDP) IS IN THE THROES OF ANOTHER CHALLENGE TO THE "MIDDLE-OF-THE-ROAD" POLICIES OF ITS HEAD, YI CH'OL-SUNG. THE STAGE WAS SET ON JANUARY 10, WHEN THE NDP'S 300-MEMBER CENTRAL STANDING COMMITTEE (CSC) ELECTED YI'S CANDIDATE, PAK YONG-NOK, ITS CHAIRMAN, AND APPROVED A FORMAL  
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DECISION BY THE 26-MEMBER POLITICAL AFFAIRS COUNCIL (PAC) TO POSTPONE UNTIL AFTER THE ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS THE REGULAR, BIENNIAL NDP CONVENTION. THE NARROWNESS OF YI'S SUPPORT IS SHOWN BY THE MARGIN OF PAK'S VICTORY, 158 VOTES TO 126. THE LOSING CANDIDATE FOR CSC CHAIRMAN WAS SUPPORTED BY "YAT'U", ("THE ASSOCIATION TO STRUGGLE FOR THE RESTORATION OF A TRUE OPPOSITION

PARTY"), A GROUP OF SENIOR PARTY MEMBERS ORGANIZED IN APRIL 1977 TO PROTEST YI'S POLICIES AS OVERLY ACCOMMODATIONIST TO THE GOVERNMENT.

2. DISSATISFIED WITH THE PAC'S DECISION NOT TO NOMINATE AN NDP CANDIDATE FOR THIS YEAR'S PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION, YAT'U BEGAN A CAMPAIGN TO COLLECT SIGNATURES FROM THE PARTY'S CONVENTION DELEGATES, REQUESTING THAT A SPECIAL CONVENTION BE CONVENED IN MARCH TO DISCUSS A) THE ISSUE OF WHETHER OR NOT A CANDIDATE SHOULD BE NAMED AND B) "OTHER ISSUES". YAT'U QUICKLY ANNOUNCED THAT IT HAD RECEIVED MORE THAN THE 249-ODD SIGNATURES (ONE-THIRD OF THE TOTAL) REQUIRED TO CALL A CONVENTION, BUT IT HAS JEALOUSLY GUARDED ITS LIST OF NAMES.

3. ALTHOUGH ALL SIX OF THE SUPREME COMMITTEEMEN WHO HEAD THE NDP OPPOSE HOLDING A CONVENTION, THE IDEA IS POPULAR WITH THE DELEGATES, BECAUSE OF THE STATUS AND MATERIAL BENEFITS THEY RECEIVE IN THE COURSE OF VOTE-GATHERING ACTIVITIES. LED BY YI CH'OL-SUNG, THE INCUMBENT SUPREME COMMITTEEMEN HAVE BEEN ARGUING AGAINST NOMINATING A PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE, ON GROUNDS THAT HE WOULD HAVE NO CHANCE TO WIN AND THAT THE VERY NOMINATION ITSELF WOULD IMPLY TOO THOROUGH-GOING AN ACCEPTANCE OF THE YUSIN SYSTEM. THE DISSIDENTS IN THE CONFIDENTIAL

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PARTY DISAGREE, SAYING NOT TO NAME A CANDIDATE WOULD MEAN PASSIVE ACCEPTANCE OF A ROLE AS A "HANDMAIDEN" OF THE GOVERNMENT.

4. AYU'U'S "STRUGGLE" IS PROVIDING ANOTHER DEMONSTRATION OF THE FACTIONALISM ENDEMIC TO THE NDP. ALTHOUGH YAT'U HAS BEEN ENCOURAGED AND AIDED RECENTLY BY FORMER PARTY HEAD KIM YONG-SAM, VICE ASSEMBLY SPEAKER YI MIN-U, AND NATIONAL ASSEMBLYMEN CHONG HAE-YONG AND KIM HYONG-IL, EVEN THIS SMALL GROUP OF NDP "OUTS" HAS REVEALED SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCE OF APPROACH. KIM YONG-SAM HAS BEEN MANEUVERING RATHER BOLDLY FOR THE NDP'S PRESIDENTIAL NOMINATION, PRE-JUDGING THE RESULTS OF THE PROPOSED CONVENTION'S DECISION ABOUT THE WISDOM OF NAMING A CANDIDATE. CHONG HAE-YONG, IN CONTRAST, HAS URGED REVISION OF THE PARTY'S COLLECTIVE LEADERSHIP SYSTEM WHILE BELIEVING IT IMPROPER TO NAME AN NDP CANDIDATE. THE PRESS RELEASE ON THE MEETING ON FEBRUARY 17 BETWEEN FOUR YAT'U LEADERS AND KIM YONG-SAM, CHONG, AND YI MIN-U SAID THAT THE TWO SIDES HAD AGREED ON A TWO-ITEM AGENDA FOR THE SPECIAL CONVENTION: A) A VOTE OF

NON-CONFIDENCE IN YI CH'OL-SUNG'S LEADERSHIP AND A DEMAND THAT HE STEP DOWN AS PARTY HEAD, AND B) DEBATE ON WHETHER OR NOT TO NAME A PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE. THIS CHANGE IN THE ORIGINAL AGENDA MEANS THAT YAU'U MUST COLLECT DELEGATES' SIGNATURES ON A NEW PETITION, OR GO THROUGH ADDITIONAL PROCEDURES TO AMEND THE NDP CONSTITUTION TO PROVIDE FOR VOTES OF CONFIDENCE IN THE PARTY HEAD. THE HARD LINE TAKEN HAS ALREADY PROMPTED DISSENT AND RENEGING BY SOME DELEGATES WHO FAVORED THE WEAKER ORIGINAL AGENDA.

5. DESPITE YAT'U'S BEST EFFORTS, SEVERAL OBSERVERS HAVE EXPRESSED DOUBT THAT A CONVENTION WILL IN FACT BE HELD THIS YEAR. EVEN AFTER YAT'U SUBMITS ITS  
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PETITION TO THE PARTY LEADERSHIP (AROUND MARCH 3), THE NDP SECRETARIAT MUST CONFIRM THE SIGNATURES OF THE DELEGATES A PROCESS WHICH CAN BE LENGTHENED GREATLY. THEREAFTER, THE MATTER MUST BE DEBATED IN THE SUPREME COUNCIL AND PAC, BOTH OF WHICH WENT ON RECORD IN JANUARY AS OPPOSING A CONVENTION IN 1978.

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INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9458

INFO AMEMBASSY TOKYO

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 SEOUL 1450

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

MOST IMPORTANT, THOUGH, THE CENTRAL STANDING COMMITTEE, BY LONG PRACTICE, MUST AGREE IN ADVANCE ON AN AGENDA, TO AVOID SHARP PARLIAMENTARY CLASHES AND THE STRONG PROBABILITY OF VIOLENCE ON THE CONVENTION FLOOR. ANY REPETITION OF THE FIGHTS WHICH MARKED THE INFAMOUS "TRUNCHEON CONVENTION" OF MAY 1976 WOULD GREATLY DAMAGE THE NDP'S IMAGE WITH THE GENERAL PUBLIC AND WORSEN ITS PROSPECTS IN THE ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS TENTATIVELY SCHEDULED FOR FEBRUARY 1979.

6. YAT'U'S RECENT ACTIVITY WAS AIDED BY THE ABSENCE ON A TRIP ABROAD OF PARTY HEAD YI CH'OL-SUNG FROM JANUARY 14 TO FEBRUARY 20. ON HIS RETURN, YI TOOK A MODERATE LINE TOWARD THESE INTRA-PARTY ISSUES, SAYING HE WOULD "CONTINUE A PATIENT DIALOGUE" WITHIN THE PARTY. HE AIMED ONE BARB AT YAT'U: "WHAT HAVE THEY DONE FOR THE PARTY?" WHILE EMPHASIZING THE IMPORTANCE OF THE CSC'S EARLIER FORMAL DECISION NOT TO NAME AN NDP CANDIDATE. OVERALL, HE MOVED TO SHIFT THE FOCUS TOWARD THE UPCOMING ASSEMBLY SESSION. A SUPREME COMMITTEE MEETING HE CHAIRED ON FEBRUARY 21

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RESOLVED TO CANCEL YI'S "NEW YEAR'S PRESS CONFERENCE" (FORMERLY SCHEDULED FOR 2/27) AND INSTEAD HAVE YI PARTICIPATE AS THE CHIEF NDP QUESTIONER IN THE ASSEMBLY INTERPELLATIONS OF THE GOVERNMENT, MARCH 2-3. THE SC ALSO SCHEDULED ANOTHER SC MEETING FEBRUARY 22, A PAC MEETING FEBRUARY 23, AND A CACUS ON NDP ASSEMBLYMEN FEBRUARY 25, BUT RESOLVED ONLY TO WATCH INTERNAL PARTY DEVELOPMENTS FOR THE NONCE.

7. COMMENT: YAT'U WILL EXPERIENCE DIFFICULTY IN ITS STRATEGY OF HOLDING YI SOLELY RESPONSIBLE FOR NDP POLICIES, BECAUSE THE OTHER FIVE SUPREME COMMITTEEMEN HAVE AT LEAST RATIFIED HIS POLICIES AT EACH STEP, IF NOT TAKEN ACTIVE PART IN SHAPING THEM. MEANWHILE, IN VIEW OF THE INTERNAL TENSIONS ALREADY VISIBLE IN YAT'U, YI MAY WELL HAVE CHOSEN THE BEST COURSE FOR HANDLING THIS CHALLENGE -- WAIT WHILE IT FALLS APART.

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## Message Attributes

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